United Nations A/C.3/71/SR.8

General Assembly
Seventy-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
24 October 2016

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 8th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 10 October 2016, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Mejía Vélez ..... (Colombia)

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16-17496 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/71/38, A/71/209, A/71/219, A/71/223, A/71/306 and A/71/398)

1. **Ms. Andujar** (Dominican Republic), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that the States members of CELAC were firmly committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women. While significant progress had been made since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, much remained to be done before those commitments were fulfilled.

2. Sustainable Development Goal 5 was a priority for the Governments of the region. Women and girls should be equal beneficiaries of all sustainable development efforts and their full and active participation in all levels of decision-making must be promoted.

3. CELAC was committed to combating all forms of violence against women, including genital mutilation and forced marriage. Women who suffered multiple forms of discrimination, such as indigenous women, women with disabilities and Afro-descendant women, were particularly vulnerable, and the States members of CELAC had agreed to step up their efforts to combat such discrimination. Particular importance had been accorded to migrant women. Their contributions to development in their countries of origin and destination must be fully recognized and their human rights should be fully respected regardless of their legal status.

4. The Governments of the region had established a working group on the advancement of women, composed of representatives from the region and civil society and supported by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). The group had met in 2014 and 2015 and was due to meet again in the Dominican Republic in November 2016. At the thirteenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean to be held in October 2016 in Montevideo, with support from ECLAC and UN-Women, would adopt a strategy to support the implementation of States' commitments on gender equality within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

5. The Commission on the Status of Women had, in the agreed conclusions of its sixtieth session in March 2016, provided a road map on how to implement the 2030 Agenda in a gender-responsive manner. It had also recognized that women were key agents of development and that gender equality and the empowerment of women would be critical to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda therefore represented an opportunity for the region to make faster progress towards gender equality. Gender statistics and indicators would be very important for monitoring implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and more dialogue was needed between producers and users.

6. The States members of CELAC would take the necessary measures to ensure the effective fulfilment of their commitments. CELAC recognized the contribution of women's organizations and civil society in placing women's interests and needs on the international agenda and renewed their strong support for the mandate of UN-Women. Lastly, CELAC commended the Secretary-General on his dedication to gender equality and the empowerment of women and hoped that his successor would continue that work.

7. **Mr. Ten-Pow** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the adoption of Goal 5 had signalled the centrality of gender issues to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

8. Commendable progress had been made to date, but a number of critical concerns remained. The Secretary-General's report on the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls (A/71/219) had noted that domestic violence was one of the more widespread forms of violence against women, while the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime had reported in 2014 that women and girls accounted for 70 per cent of all trafficking victims detected globally.

9. CARICOM Governments remained committed to the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality. In 2014, the Council for Human and Social Development of CARICOM had approved a strategy and plan to reduce the number of adolescent

pregnancies in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. Almost all CARICOM countries had enacted legislation to protect victims and criminalize acts of physical, psychological and sexual violence.

10. Notwithstanding those advances, multiple challenges lay ahead. The Caribbean Human Development Report for 2016 had noted that violence against women affected between 20 and 25 per cent of women in the CARICOM member States for which data was available. Progress on gender equality in the Caribbean was uneven. Higher numbers of women were completing tertiary education, which had led to an increase in female participation in the workforce in a number of countries, and more women were holding Government positions and elected offices. However, women were more likely to be unemployed, although the gap was narrowing, and tended to be concentrated in poorly paid jobs. Almost half of all households in CARICOM member States were headed by women. The poverty rate among single mothers, older and disabled women remained high and poverty was associated with other vulnerabilities, such as higher infant mortality rates, lower school enrolment and, in some States, high suicide rates.

11. The States members of CARICOM had embraced the goal of a violence-free society and believed that greater access to work opportunities would empower women economically and allow them to leave abusive relationships. Planned migration policies must be implemented to combat irregular migration, which included the trafficking of women. In addition, greater collaboration was needed between Government agencies, civil society and the private sector; advocacy campaigns must address discriminatory attitudes and practices that condoned violence against women; and efforts to engage men and boys in the promotion of gender equality must be strengthened.

12. All sources of financing must be harnessed to ensure that adequate resources were available to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and official development assistance would continue to play a pivotal role in promoting gender equality. The States members of CARICOM therefore called on developed countries to fulfil their commitments under the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and to ensure adequate, regular and predictable resources to enable the United Nations system, and UN-Women in particular, to discharge their mandates.

13. CARICOM reaffirmed its commitment to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular those related to the advancement of women and girls. The 2030 Agenda represented a tremendous opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the most vulnerable, who were at the greatest risk of being left behind.

14. **Mr. Ibrahim** (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the pursuit of gender equality was one of the fundamental goals of ASEAN. It had demonstrated its commitment to gender equality through the establishment of its Committee on Women and its declarations on the advancement of women and the elimination of violence against women, adopted in 1998 and 2004, respectively. The 2016-2020 work plan of the Committee on Women aimed to further promote women's rights and incorporated elements of the ASEAN Charter and the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015. Input had also been received from the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children.

15. A declaration on the elimination of violence against women and children had been adopted in 2013, and regional plans of action for its implementation were being developed. Among other activities, a network of social services agencies involved in protecting and assisting the victims of violence was being launched; action had been taken to incorporate a gender perspective into different areas of development, including two regional events on gender and climate change in 2015; and a gender-sensitive guideline to improve the handling of women and girl victims of human trafficking was being finalized.

16. The ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children had continued to work with United Nations agencies. A third interface dialogue had been held with the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children at its February 2016 meeting, and a statement had been issued supporting the High Time to End Violence against Children initiative. In addition, a regional training

session on integrating gender perspectives in national social protection policies had been held in Manila in June 2015.

17. Steadfast support from ASEAN members had led to increased economic empowerment of women in the region. Various national and regional mechanisms, such as ASEAN Women Parliamentarians and ASEAN Women's Circle, were working to advance women's causes and their participation across all sectors. ASEAN was committed to ensuring that the goal of gender equality remained an integral part of its policies and programmes and the development of its Community. It looked forward to working with the United Nations and other partners on building a more prosperous and inclusive global community, in which women played an integral role in socioeconomic development. Given that women were key agents of change and development, their well-being and empowerment would contribute significantly to implementation of the 2030 Agenda. ASEAN therefore looked forward to exploring all possible forms of collaboration with the United Nations and other partners to support the advancement of women in the region.

18. **Ms. Adamson** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that unprecedented levels of human mobility in 2016 were presenting serious challenges. Migration placed women and children at greater risk of sexual violence and abuse; the international community must take a gender-based approach to migration to meet the specific protection needs of women and girls on the move and fulfil the commitment made by the General Assembly in its New York Declaration of 19 September 2016. The European Union was stepping up its efforts to ensure that women and girls had access to medical care, legal support and psycho-social care during the asylum process.

19. All European Union-funded humanitarian aid operations were required to be gender- and age-sensitive, and to ensure effective implementation of its humanitarian gender policy, the European Union had invested in capacity-building and tools, such as its Gender-Age Marker. With regard to the creation of the European Union Facility for Refugees in Turkey and other measures taken in Jordan and Lebanon, projects were based on gender-sensitive needs assessments, and the impact on women and girls was monitored. Implementing partners must ensure that actions benefited women and girls as well and men and boys. The €1.8 billion Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa was designed to promote gender equality at the grass-roots level and protect women and girls along migration routes. Reducing gender inequality would help prevent further violence.

20. Beyond migration, the European Union was strongly committed to supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda and had strong frameworks in place to help its partner countries achieve tangible results in their pursuit of gender equality. Action would be taken in four priority areas: ensuring the physical and psychological integrity of girls and women; promoting their economic, social and cultural rights; strengthening their political and civil rights; and shifting the institutional culture of the European Union, so that it could deliver more effectively on its commitments.

21. Governments bore the primary responsibility for implementing the commitments made but the European Union welcomed the ongoing dialogue on collective lessons learned and the outstanding gaps and challenges for gender equality and gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system.

22. With regard to implementation of the Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, the newly adopted Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy had placed special emphasis on the prevention of all forms of gender-based violence and on the participation of women in peace processes and the prevention of conflict. Implementation of the strategy had involved continuing to support the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; allocating over €11 million of the European Union's humanitarian aid to addressing sexual and gender-based violence in 2015; working on the gender dimension of terrorism and violent

extremism; and strengthening networks and partnerships.

23. Despite recent progress, no country had yet achieved full gender equality. The European Union looked forward to engaging with its partners to ensure that the resolutions adopted within the framework of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly on gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of women were as robust as possible.

24. **Ms. Owens** (United States of America) said that her Government sought to advance the rights and status of women and girls, promote gender equality in its foreign policy and combat gender-based violence. It was also working to combat the harmful practice of female genital mutilation and to address obstetric fistula through promoting sexual and reproductive health rights, including increased access to skilled birth attendance and preventing adolescent pregnancy.

25. The United States partnered with Governments around the world to combat human trafficking in all its forms and had awarded over $ 18 million in grants to combat that hidden crime. Given the risks faced by stateless persons, especially women and children, and the historic numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons in the world, women must have the right to confer citizenship on their children and spouses. Her delegation had sponsored Human Rights Council resolution 32/7, which sought to eliminate discrimination against women in that area. She noted with satisfaction that the recently-adopted New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants acknowledged the need to reduce statelessness to prevent and address forced displacement.

26. **Ms. Abdelkawy** (Egypt) said that in 2016, Egypt had begun implementation of a national strategy to combat violence against women. That strategy's methodology focused on four areas: prevention, protection, victims' services and prosecution, and a report was being drafted in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund to determine the extent of the phenomenon and its economic costs. At the beginning of the previous week, the National Council for Women had launched the second phase of a campaign to support and empower Egyptian women and to challenge stereotypes about them. The campaign also addressed the issue of sexual harassment and women's economic and political empowerment. The Council's legislative committee, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and the United Nations Development Programme, had prepared a draft law on combating violence against women that was expected to be discussed in the parliament.

27. Egypt stressed that the custom of female genital mutilation was in no way whatsoever connected with Islam or any of the divinely revealed religions. Rather, it was a form of violence against women and must be utterly eradicated. To that end, the Egyptian cabinet had endorsed a draft law imposing harsher penalties for anyone performing it and reclassifying it from a misdemeanour to a felony. The Egyptian National Population Council, in cooperation with the United Nations, had conducted training for police, prosecutors, judges and forensic experts in matters related to female genital mutilation, and the country had formulated medical guidelines to address gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation. Those guidelines provided that services be made available to victims and that perpetrators be reported and held accountable.

28. Women's participation in parliament had increased to 15 per cent, a figure which also included women with disabilities. The quota for women in local government had reached 25 per cent. There were currently 66 women judges, and the number of women in the diplomatic corps and at Egyptian embassies had been increasing every year.

29. **Ms. Sandoval** (Paraguay) said that the Constitution of Paraguay guaranteed equality between women and men, and her Government was working to make that provision a reality. The third national equal opportunity plan, the principal instrument for mainstreaming the gender perspective in public policies, was designed to break with the historical and cultural imbalance between women and men in society. The Public Policies for Rural Women Act sought to guarantee the rights of, and empower, rural women. Conditional monetary transfer programmes that prioritized female heads of household were being implemented to overcome the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Laws had also been enacted to promote breastfeeding and to protect domestic workers and caregivers. A bill for the comprehensive protection of women against all forms of violence, containing a

legal definition of the crime of femicide, had already received partial approval.

30. **Ms. Al Fassam** (Kuwait) said that Kuwait shared the view that States must step up their efforts to prevent violence against women and, in cooperation with the relevant United Nations organizations, should engage in further research regarding the connection between migration and human trafficking, with a view to developing procedures that took age and sex into account in addressing the vulnerability experienced by migrant women and girls in situations of armed conflict and natural disasters.

31. The Kuwaiti constitution affirmed that all people were equal in terms of dignity and shared equal rights and duties in the eyes of the law. In line with the recommendations of the Secretariat, Kuwait had taken a number of measures to advance of women and protect their rights, such as recognition of the principle of equal wages for men and women in the private sector, and the inclusion of women in the judiciary and the military. Targets related to women's empowerment were part of the development agenda of Kuwait for 2019-2020. Among those targets was the elimination of discrimination against women through formation of a committee to review existing legislation and propose amendments that would bring about equality between the sexes.

32. Kuwait encouraged education for women and girls. A higher percentage of women than men were enrolled in educational institutions, with women accounting for 52 per cent of regular education students and 66 per cent of higher education students. Kuwaiti women received special attention in the area of health care, as the State had enacted legislation making pre-marital medical screening mandatory and had provided opportunities for girls to be vaccinated against cancer. Kuwait had granted working mothers a number of rights, including generous maternity and post-delivery leave. Kuwait's commitment to women's empowerment was reflected in its ratification of a number of relevant international instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

33. **Mr. Sauer** (Finland) said that violence against women and girls was a waste of human potential and seriously undermined the development of entire societies. Discrimination and violence must not be allowed to undermine efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In order to make progress on the issue, the gender stereotypes surrounding masculinity must also be addressed and men and boys must become part of the solution. Women's participation in development unlocked the potential for economic growth. Finland had benefited from ensuring women's equal political rights, the right to education, work and social protection, to own and inherit property as well as to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Freedom to make decisions over their own bodies was crucial for ensuring the health, well-being and empowerment of women.

34. The sixth Global Forum on Gender Statistics, currently being organized in Helsinki in conjunction with the United Nations Statistics Division, would focus on data and statistical methods for the follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators from a gender perspective. It would also reflect on different methods of producing, analysing and using data to measure and monitor women's economic empowerment and other gender issues. Statistics Finland had worked with the National Police Board of Finland to improve data concerning violent offences and violence against women. For instance, the 2016 edition of *Women and Men in Finland* contained detailed, gender-specific statistics on victims of crimes and on the use of shelters. A 2014 study on labour discrimination examined gender-based discrimination and unequal treatment.

35. **Mr. Heinzer** (Switzerland) said that the prevention of violence against women had been incorporated into his country's international cooperation programme, legislative programme and national sustainable development strategy, and the issue of sexual and gender-based violence had been included as a priority in its humanitarian assistance strategy.

36. Noting with concern the figures on obstetric fistula contained in the report of the Secretary-General on intensifying efforts to end obstetric fistula (A/71/306*), he said that not only young and adolescent girls but also their families must be better informed as to the risks involved in early pregnancy and childbirth. Greater investment in health-care systems was needed to guarantee rapid access to high-quality obstetric and neonatal care. Men and boys and

the younger generation as a whole should be mobilized to support the elimination of female genital mutilation as they would be able to challenge the deeply rooted inequalities and social norms that perpetuated that harmful practice.

37. Member States had a duty to step up their efforts to promote partnerships and better coordinate initiatives to eliminate violence and ensure that the rights of women were fulfilled. The voices of young men and women must be heard.

38. **Mr. Yesod** (Israel) said that Israel strove for a world in which everyone was treated fairly, in which gender equality was a given and in which women would be successful in winning their rights. The paralysing fear of violence, female genital mutilation, child marriages and other horrific acts must not be allowed to control societies. Men and boys must be educated about gender equality. Women, for their part, should not be denied an education while their male counterparts were in school. Higher economic growth could be attained through the education of women and girls. The labour market needed to open up and integrate women fully and equally, especially in leadership positions, whether in the public or the private sector or as presidents, prime ministers or senior United Nations officials. It was not a matter of strengthening women, for they were already strong, but rather of changing the world's perception of that strength.

39. **Mr. Lambertini** (Italy) said that women's issues were deeply intertwined with every aspect of development, health, social equity and the enjoyment of human rights. The full social, economic and political empowerment of women was not just a moral imperative and a matter of justice but also a multiplier of well-being and development for societies. Italy was at the forefront of international multilateral action to end harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and forced or child marriage and was committed to working with partner countries and all concerned stakeholders to prevent violations of the human rights of women.

40. The issue of sexual violence must be given the centrality it deserved along with the economic and political empowerment of women. Italy was committed to preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based crimes in situations of conflict. Women put their lives and those of their children at risk when fleeing conflict in their countries in search of a better future. The enormous challenges still persisting underscored the need to focus not only on the symptoms but also on the structural causes of gender-based violence and discrimination.

41. **Mr. Thinkeomeuangneua** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that his country had a series of laws and institutions to protect women's interests and further their advancement. The Lao National Commission for the Advancement of women, established in 2003, assisted the Government in formulating national policy and strategy to promote women's advancement and acted as the focal point for gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Under its guidance, the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women 2011-2015 had been adopted and workshops and seminars had been organized on gender issues.

42. Another organization, the Lao Women's Union, had established five-year plans to promote gender equality, protect women's rights and monitor implementation of Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Development Plan for Lao Women was established to promote legal awareness among women, improve their education, skills, health and nutrition and create income-generating opportunities. The Government attached great importance to fulfilment of the major international instruments relating to the advancement of women and, as a result, gender parity had improved steadily at all levels.

43. **Mr. Joshi** (India) said that India had successfully integrated gender mainstreaming into its governance system. The National Policy for Women was being updated to establish a solid foundation to accelerate the commitment to fulfilment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. Various financial inclusion, micro-credit and income-generation policies and programmes had been launched with women as the main beneficiaries. A landmark achievement enabled women to participate in political decision-making through a quota of one-third of seats reserved for women, and in many states, half of the seats in local and urban self-government entities were also reserved for women. More than 1.5 million

women participated in decision-making at the local level.

44. India had achieved gender parity in primary education and important programmes had been launched to change the mindset and remove the centuries-old bias in the society. Direct cash benefits, incentive schemes and other health programmes were aimed at reducing maternal and child mortality rates. Maternity leave had been increased to 26 weeks and that change was expected to reduce infant mortality rates. National legislation on trafficking was being brought in line with international commitments.

45. **Mr. Morităn** (Argentina) said that his country placed special emphasis on the empowerment of women who were subjected to violence and experienced multiple forms of discrimination. Older women suffered from discriminatory laws and practices and their situation was cause for concern. Pursuant to a State policy for the eradication of all forms of violence against women, Argentina was implementing its first national preventative action plan to assist women at risk.

46. Convinced that national efforts to achieve gender equality should be reflected in similar efforts within the United Nations, members of his Government had signed the Gqual Declaration and joined the campaign for the promotion of gender parity in international tribunals and other bodies. He commended Spain on the establishment of a network of focal points on the issue of women, peace and security. The focal point designated by his Government would help to further that initiative.

47. The Government of Argentina gave priority attention to the prevention and punishment of the crime of trafficking in persons and sought to improve its capacity to assist and protect victims. Mechanisms should be set up to provide free legal counsel for victims.

48. **Ms. Zaizar** (Mexico) said that generation after generation had grown up with the idea that the objectification of women was natural, the roles of men and women in society were pre-established, and gender violence was normalized, even in a century of technology and globalization. The impact of social media, however, could be used to combat gender-based violence, if women were given the opportunity to demonstrate their competence and capacity for leadership on a daily basis. Failing that, the injustices of the past would be perpetuated.

49. In 2015, her Government had adopted the National Strategy for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention, which aimed to halve the adolescent fertility rate and to prevent pregnancy in girls under the age of 14. She also welcomed the efforts by Latin American countries to draw up a joint strategy and was confident that the outcome of the forthcoming Regional Conference of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean would contribute to the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda.

50. Countries must improve their production of disaggregated gender-based statistics. As a leader in that area and in conjunction with UN-Women, Mexico would shortly be establishing a centre for excellence on statistics from a gender perspective, whose overall objective would be to facilitate accountability mechanisms and provide guidelines for the establishment of laws and public policies.

51. Conscious of the multidimensional discrimination, socioeconomic inequality and exclusion from political power faced by women in Mexico, the Government had taken up the challenge to address the underlying causes of the obstacles to the advancement of the rights of women. She called on States to continue to deepen their political commitments with a view to the collective achievement of Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

52. **Mr. Ruiz Blanco** (Colombia) said that his country had built a robust legal and policy framework for promoting women in all areas of State activity, in keeping with international agreements, national legislation and the requests of women's movements and civil society. In its approach to tackling violence against women, Colombia focused on three aspects: prevention, care and coordination. The focus on prevention ensured gender mainstreaming in all policies pertaining to violence against women; the care dimension related to the improvement of relevant health-care and judicial services; and the coordination dimension emphasized better interaction between national bodies, the tightening of legislation and improved data and follow-up.

53. In 2015, his Government had approved one law criminalizing femicide and another increasing penalties for attacks perpetrated using chemical agents and stripping the aggressors of certain legal benefits.

54. Colombia had experienced the advantages of women's involvement in peacebuilding first hand, since almost one third of the negotiators in the peace talks between the Government and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) had been women. That process demonstrated the Government's commitment to women and its awareness that women had suffered the most in the country's armed conflict. It was crucial for women to continue to play a prominent role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

55. **Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Cuba) said that progress in the advancement of women had been fragile and insufficient. Women accounted for some 75 per cent of refugees and displaced persons, 70 per cent of the poor and two thirds of illiterate adults. Over 300,000 women died each year from avoidable complications during childbirth.

56. Cuba had been the first country to sign the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Cuban women now enjoyed equal conditions to men: they received the same salary for work of equal value; were entitled to draw benefits if they became widowed, had disabilities or gave birth; could own land; take out loans; and access high-quality free educational and health services. Sexual and reproductive rights, including the right to abortion and freedom to choose the number and spacing of children, were guaranteed.

57. Efforts to improve the sharing of the care burden within the family and to increase the presence of women in high-level government positions were ongoing. Unemployment of women currently stood at 3.5 per cent, with women accounting for 48 per cent of the civil service (where they held 47 per cent of senior management posts) and almost 49 per cent of the members of parliament.

58. The elimination of violence against women, however, required the elimination of all unilateral coercive measures. The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba was a form of violence inflicted on Cuban women and girls and an obstacle to their advancement.

59. **Ms. Sukacheva** (Russian Federation) said that gender equality and the advancement of women remained as relevant as ever in the face of a turbulent global economy and an unstable political environment. Although much had been achieved since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, no country had entirely eradicated violence against women and girls.

60. The Commission on the Status of Women should continue to be the main coordinating body in the United Nations system for gender issues and the forum for constructive dialogue between Member States. The Russian Federation had stepped up its efforts to form a comprehensive policy on women's issues in recent years and was currently drawing up a national strategy in that regard. The strategy focused on boosting women's involvement in political life and decision-making, including by imposing quotas on political parties; enhancing the economic situation of women through incentives to women entrepreneurs; improving women's health care; preventing violence against women; and overhauling gender stereotypes.

61. The Russian Federation was constantly enhancing its partnerships on gender-related issues and had held successful consultations at events involving the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) group, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the Women in Parliaments Global Forum. Russian non-governmental organizations were also collaborating more intensively with their foreign counterparts, as exemplified by the General Assembly of the European Centre of the International Council of Women in Moscow, which had involved representatives from 20 countries. Following the success of the Eurasian Women's Forum held in Saint Petersburg in September 2015, a decision had also been taken to make the forum an annual event.

62. **Mr. Coloma Grimberg** (Chile) said that his Government attached utmost importance to the eradication of violence against women in all its forms. Statistics on violence against women provided by Member States during the current debate were alarming. In order to tackle the problem, Governments required reliable data so as to tailor their policies and laws to the specific situation in their country and subsequently needed the resolve to apply those laws

effectively. Chile was confronting that scourge with determination and, in 2014, had included a specific line on the prevention of violence against women in its national budget for the first time. The training of monitors, public awareness campaigns and education no the topic from school age onwards were important methods for preventing such violence.

63. His country was particularly concerned by cases of extreme violence against women, such as femicide, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Regular information should be disseminated on such practices so that the public could be made aware of the gravity of the problem and of the importance of stopping it. Given that Chile was ranked among the 25 countries worldwide with the highest rates of femicide, his Government was grateful that the Special Rapporteur on violence against women had placed new emphasis on that dimension and looked forward to cooperating with her office.

64. **Mr. Raja Zaib Shah** (Malaysia) said that his Government had made efforts to involve women more effectively in Malaysia's economic and social development and had set targets of increasing the labour participation rate from 54 to 59 per cent by 2020. His country had already achieved its target of increasing the number of women in decision-making positions in the public sector to 35 per cent in 2015, while the corporate world was following suit and progressing towards its goal of 30 per cent. A council had been established to advise the Government on the empowerment of women and ensure that specific policies and legislation were formulated for the advancement of women.

65. The Government was keenly aware of the social and economic problems facing single mothers, particularly in rural areas. In 2015, it had launched a national action plan to offer them training and entrepreneurship opportunities and thereby improve their access to the job market. Programmes had also been run across the country to increase legal literacy among communities and ensure that victims of violence received holistic support and assistance.

66. **Ms. Salim** (Libya) said that it was worrying that women still experienced discrimination based on negative stereotypes which made women one of the most vulnerable and marginalized social groups. They were victims of human trafficking and domestic and sexual violence, particularly in armed conflict and in post-conflict situations. Despite the security, political and economic challenges faced by Libya, the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord was committed to defending women's rights and reaffirmed its obligations under the relevant regional and international instruments to which Libya was a party. Libya also stressed that measures should be adopted to ensure accountability and to prevent impunity.

67. Equality between the sexes in Libya was enshrined in law and guaranteed pursuant to the Constitutional Declaration of 2011. National legislation also guaranteed women's rights such as the right to education, the right to health care, the right to hold property and pursue economic activities, the right to political participation and the right to make decisions without being subject to sexual discrimination. Nevertheless, the participation of Libyan women in many spheres fell short of aspirations, which was understandable given Libya's circumstances, but still unacceptable, and thus the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord had issued decision No. 210 of 2016 establishing a unit to support and empower women, which was a crucial step toward giving women a larger role in political life. Libyan women had had an effective role in establishing and managing civil society organizations and had taken part in raising awareness of the rights of women contained in national laws.

68. **Ms. Salazar** (Peru), speaking as a youth delegate, reaffirmed the importance of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the progress reports on the implementation of commitments adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women. Although Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda specifically called for countries to join forces to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls and eliminate all gender-based violence, including early and forced marriage, gender equality was a component of every Sustainable Development Goal and was reflected in all of Peru's national initiatives to empower women and achieve social inclusion.

69. Peru's national gender equality plan for 2012-2017 aimed to mainstream the gender perspective at all levels of public administration and guarantee equality,

effective protection of human rights, non-discrimination and the full realization of individual and collective capacities. The national plan against gender violence 2016-2021 focused on initiatives to change sociocultural patterns in power and hierarchical structures which legitimated gender violence. The Government had also agreed to introduce mechanisms to empower women politically, by guaranteeing them seats in elections, and economically, by promoting their inclusion in Government social programmes.

70. The current Government of Peru aspired to bring about a social revolution, putting an end to gender inequality and ensuring that all men and women were entitled to full citizenship and physical, political and economic freedom. Gender equality and the rights of women and children were crucial in the path towards sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals must be achieved by 2030 and no later.

71. **Ms. Alsuwaidi** (United Arab Emirates) said that her country had sought to improve and strengthen national policies and legislation aimed at raising the status of women in society. A recent measure adopted by the Government in that regard was the increase of the number of women in leadership positions, including government positions. The Women's General Union and the Gender Balance Council was amending current national strategies and formulating new policies to empower women in line with the United Arab Emirates Vision 2021 and international standards. The Gender Balance Council had also created a committee to review the law on post-delivery leave and maternity leave.

72. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had welcomed measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates to combat violence against women, including amendments to the federal law against human trafficking designed to provide increased protection to victims of such trafficking.

73. The United Arab Emirates had contributed to women's economic empowerment globally through its membership in the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment. The work of that panel was based on the conviction that women's economic empowerment was the cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The United Arab Emirates was also a strong supporter of the Every Woman Every Child Everywhere initiative to reduce maternal and infant mortality, as over 50per cent of such fatalities took place in fragile humanitarian situations and were thus preventable. The United Arab Emirates had supported this initiative by joining the Secretary-General's Every Woman Every Child high-level advisory group.

74. **Mr. Nguyen** Duy Thanh (Viet Nam) said that women had played an essential role throughout Viet Nam's history and were a driving force of its economic and social development. They accounted for almost half of the labour force and a quarter of business leaders. They actively participated in policy-making and legislative processes, with many in senior leadership positions, including the newly-elected chairperson of the National Assembly. School enrolment rates for boys and girls were almost equal and the gender wage gap was gradually narrowing, in line with international standards. Viet Nam was working closely with international partners to improve gender mainstreaming and had helped to organize an international seminar on educating women and girls in preventing and combating trafficking in persons during the thirty-third session of the Human Rights Council.

75. Despite the progress made, the country still faced challenges to counter the effects of climate change and natural disasters. Since late 2015, Viet Nam had been beset by a serious drought in the central highlands and the Mekong Delta region, hampering access to clean water and sanitation and threatening the livelihoods of at least two million people, mostly women and girls.

76. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that her country was staunchly committed to promoting the emancipation of women and gender equality and had made structural reforms to strengthen the role of the family. The revision of the Family Code had promoted the role of women within the family and society. The new Moroccan Constitution explicitly highlighted gender equality and called for the establishment of a supreme authority responsible for promoting equality and combating discrimination. Morocco recognized the primacy of international law over domestic law and the Government had ratified and lifted its reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol. It had also recast various provisions in

domestic law that violated women's rights or discriminated against them.

77. The growing participation of women in decision-making roles in parliament, the Government and the judiciary was proof of Morocco's political will. Women had won one third of the seats during municipal and regional elections in 2015 and reforms had mandated the inclusion of as many women as men on the ballot for elections to the upper house of parliament. Morocco had also incorporated human rights instruction into curriculums and created university posts for the study of human rights and the cultivation of peace. Civil society was increasingly active in lobbying for women's rights in Morocco.

78. The experiment of results-driven gender-sensitive budgets, as supported by UN-Women, had generated more data for evaluating the gender aspect of public policies and the practice had now been rolled out at the regional and international levels.

79. **Mr. Patriota** (Brazil) said that the agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women held in March 2016 was the first intergovernmental document since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda to elaborate on how the gender perspective of the 2030 Agenda should be applied. The Human Rights Council had expanded further on that topic in resolution A/HRC/32/L.25. His delegation was also committed to mainstreaming and accelerating the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. All three documents contributed enormously to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

80. Brazil had implemented several key initiatives in recent decades to advance the rights and economic and political empowerment of women, including regulations on domestic work to enhance women's access to decent employment, measures to redistribute income to women and an entrepreneurship scheme to improve access of women to the formal economy. In many countries, the number of women in the labour force had been adversely affected by the unaffordable cost of care services, scant provisions for parental paid leave and a lack of financial support for families with children. As the self-regulating market appeared to accentuate discrimination, Member States should consider how to encourage the private sector to assume greater responsibility for boosting women's participation in the labour market.

81. **Ms. Owino** (Kenya) said that her Government was committed to achieving its goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and recognized the link between that goal and sustainable development. Political, civil, social and economic rights and freedom from discrimination were enshrined in the Kenyan Constitution, while the national development blueprint, Vision 2030, underscored the importance of gender mainstreaming, women's empowerment in sustainable development and gender equity in resource distribution and power. The Government had enacted numerous policies to promote women's rights, including legislation on domestic violence, female genital mutilation, sexual offences, employment, trafficking, marriage and gender-based violence.

82. A board tasked with reducing rates of female genital mutilation had overseen a 17 per cent drop in its prevalence between 2008 and 20[illegible]nd a campaign to end child marriages in Africa would soon be launched. Since starting to offer free education, Kenya had achieved near gender parity in primary and secondary schools and the construction of boarding schools in nomadic communities, the provision of sanitary towels and the prohibition of child marriage had increased transition rates of girls from primary to secondary school. The Government had also earmarked $43 million to the provision of maternity services, resulting in a 17 per cent increase in deliveries at health facilities since mid-2013. Lastly, gender equality in the political sphere had improved significantly, with women accounting for a quarter of all members of parliament and over 40 per cent of the judiciary.

83. **Ms. Mainali** (Nepal) said that Nepal's constitution, adopted in September 2015, guaranteed that 33 per cent of parliamentary seats would be held by women, with a balance between men and women at the top positions. The Constitution also stipulated that persons of the same gender or community could not occupy both the offices of the president and the vice-president at the same time, and ensured freedom from all forms of exploitation and equal rights in family and property matters.

84. Nepal was a party to a number of human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against

Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and had been implementing national plans of action in that regard. Nepal had been the first South Asian country to develop a national plan of action on Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was yet another platform for addressing the advancement of women, and the Government of Nepal had prepared a preliminary national report on sustainable development goals with a view to integrating the 2030 Agenda into its national plans, including Goal 5.

85. Nepal was committed to eliminating gender-based violence, discrimination and exclusion, as well as trafficking in women and girls. In 2010, a unit had been created under the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers to combat gender-based violence, which was tasked with monitoring complaints of gender-based violence and subsequent government action. Nepal had also been implementing a national strategy on gender-based violence since 2012.

86. **Mr. Pedersen** (Norway) said that it was a sad fact that in all societies, girls were subjected to sexual harassment and sometimes violence, and that in some countries they were denied access to abortion in cases of pregnancy due to rape. Child marriage and forced marriage were violence and abuse, and it was unacceptable that the tradition was still widespread in 2016 and that religion and "traditional values" were used as an excuse to deprive girls of their rights. All forms of violence against women, including intimate partner violence, marital rape, trafficking in women and female genital mutilation, must be eradicated, and men must be involved in that effort, especially men with the power to influence change in gender norms.

87. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was ambitious, and the resources and talents of women must be utilized in order for the Sustainable Development Goals to succeed, in the form of equal access to education, jobs, property and decision-making. Education in particular was fundamental to sustainable development and crucial in order for women to hold political and economic positions, and for that reason, Norway had made education a top priority in its development cooperation. The most difficult job remained: reaching the most marginalized women — poor, rural, minority or disabled women — who had not been part of the progress which had taken place in health and education over the past 15 years.

88. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that since the 1920s, Syrian constitutions and laws had promoted and empowered Syrian women and endowed them with all rights to make them fully equal with men in all aspects of political, economic and cultural life, and their achievements had surpassed those of their counterparts in the region. In 1948, Syria had been the first Arab country to give women the right to vote in parliamentary elections and in 1973, the first woman parliamentarian had been elected, and 2016 had seen the appointment of the first woman speaker of parliament. A woman occupied the role of vice president of the republic, and others worked as pilots and ambassadors.

89. The previous five years had been difficult ones, with Syrian women bearing the brunt of the most heinous forms of terrorism and extremism. Many had been killed by terrorists for the mere offence of having a Facebook account. Others had chosen suicide as an alternative to forced marriage or rape by terrorists, and hundreds of Syrian girls had been kidnapped from their homes, in front of their families, and forced into slavery and sold at auctions held by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front. That was in addition to the abysmal conditions endured by Syrian women in camps on the borders of neighbouring countries, and the ships of death crammed with thousands of Syrian women on the Mediterranean, which had become a source of income for terrorist Turkish mafias. Palestinian and Syrian women were still suffering in Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan as a result of the stifling Israeli occupation. Had the time not come for the countries involved in the war to stop supporting terrorism in Syria so that hope and security could be restored? Was it not incumbent upon all to implement Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014)?

90. **Ms. Zahir** (Maldives) said that despite the pursuit of a world in which girls and women were able to fully enjoy their human rights, they continued to be subject to gender-based violence, faced barriers in access to education, and were disproportionately affected by global conflicts. The Government of the Maldives believed that with additional resources,

determination and innovation, progress could be accelerated. To that end, the Maldives had formulated an inclusive education policy that guaranteed equal access to education for all girls. In 2015, 55 per cent of all high school graduates had been girls. That same inclusivity extended to the workplace: under the Employment Act, women and men were guaranteed equal access to employment and equal pay for equal work. The Act also outlawed the use of sex or marital status as a basis for dismissal, and included generous maternity leave provisions.

91. Women remained underrepresented in the political and economic spheres, although progress had been made. The Government had recently enacted the groundbreaking Gender Equality Act, which sought to ensure gender equality in all spheres of society and give full effect to the equal rights guaranteed by the constitution. The Act required the State and political parties to ensure that equal opportunities existed for women to participate at all levels of political life, and also contained provisions that strengthened victims' defences against perpetrators of sexual violence. Other stringent laws and policies that had been put in place by the Maldives to prevent violence against women and girls included the Sexual Harassment and Prevention Act, and the Maldives had criminalized marital rape since 2014.

92. **Ms. Nescher** (Principality of Liechtenstein) said that there was growing evidence that women's political participation improved decision-making processes. The participation of women in parliaments had broadened agendas, resulting, for example, in better childcare policies or the successful implementation of drinking water projects. Women's access to higher education and higher female labour-force participation enhanced economic growth. Admittedly, structural gender inequalities were aggravated in times of conflict and women were exposed, in those situations, to even worse violence; however, that did not define women. Indeed, they were powerful agents of change for ensuring sustainable peace in the aftermath. All those involved in current peace processes, in particular in Syria, should make gender equality and women's empowerment a priority.

93. Gender equality started with the understanding that women were equal partners in every aspect of life. Yet even within the United Nations, a clear gender imbalance could be seen. She looked forward to seeing more women represented in senior positions in the Organization.

94. **Ms. Dantuono** (Observer for the Holy See) said that it was alarming that 35 per cent of women worldwide had experienced physical violence at some point in their lives. The Pope had condemned all forms of violence against women as unacceptable, in particular domestic violence. Violence in the family often extended into the economic, political, social and cultural spheres and led to women being deprived of economic resources and unable to exercise their rights to participation.

95. The promotion of inclusive and equitable economies would have a profound impact on the advancement of women in a world where women bore the brunt of poverty. The Pope had noted that women who endured exclusion, mistreatment and violence were less able to defend their rights yet often displayed heroism in the way they protected their families.

96. The Holy See supported the Secretary-General's recommendations regarding female genital mutilation. Many Catholic institutions were working to change cultural practices and empower young women to resist such violence. Human trafficking and other forms of modern-day slavery were also top priorities for the Holy See; slavery ran counter to all the principles that the United Nations stood for and the international community must fight it in all its forms.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.